Introduction

The health situation in Kenya is one of the poorest in the world. The country registers values below all three WHO health-for-all targets (WHO 2006). Western Kenya is particularly affected with high HIV/AIDS, malaria and child and maternal mortality rates. Schools are important because they are institutions most children in Kenya attend regularly. Teachers play crucial roles in implementing health promotion measures at the local level as one of few local professionals in rural areas. In practice, however, the learning environment in many schools is abstract, theoretical and hierarchical. Teachers lecture with a top-down teaching style, which leaves children passively to learn by rote. This influences children’s possibilities for participating in their own learning processes and thus limits their access to gain action-oriented knowledge, which can help them to become active and competent in health (Dahl 1999, 2006). This has been identified by the government as a pressing problem and an impediment to deep reform of the education system (MOE 2006, MOEST 2005, 2006). The challenge is to center children in the learning process, and change the learning situation into one that is more inclusive and participatory. The concept of action competence (AC) is a practical strategy to realise this ambition and make children active, competent and self-reliant in managing their own health situation (Jensen 1993). With AC I mean participation, action, possibilities for social change, and a broad and positive valorisation of health. This paper suggests looking at the actual educational practices in schools and the “normsupporting” structures including policies that lead to such practices, with a focus on teachers’ competencies.

The international consensus around “Education For All” (EFA) reached in Jomtien in 1990 (WCEFA 1990) has lead to a shift in educational strategies at the policy level in many developing countries during the last 10-15 years. This is also true of Kenya. These new intentions for pedagogical and school practices have elevated Western-oriented normative values such as child-oriented teaching, educational inclusive, participation and democratic engagement (see KIE, 1994, MOEST, 2005, 2006). While some have pointed at the negative consequences of implementing an EFA-strategy in Kenya and other countries in Africa (Meinert, 2001, Samoff, 1993, Serpell, 1993, Stambach 2000), my own research has pointed at, that the Kenyan education system consists of various opposing and conflicting paradigms of educational practice and logics which result in a transforma-
tion of political and governmental ideas and visions into radically different practices at the local school level. In relation to Teacher Training College (TTC), these conflicting paradigms lead to a subversion of the ultimate goal of political reform and individual emancipation by the demands - primarily from the government and regulatory agencies - for certain bureaucratic structures, “technologies” and practices, that make innovative teaching difficult if not impossible. Further, my own research indicates that teachers in Kenya during their work in schools develop a number of different practices and particular teacher habitus, especially in the field of HE (Dahl, 2005). TTCs are therefore institutions of critical importance to implement educational reform and the political ambitions enshrined in EFA. Research on their role is, however, sparse, and this study aims to address this shortfall. One perspective of the upcoming study therefore is to examine, how TTCs regulate the becoming of teachers and their health education competences, and to which extent TTCs are barriers for the implementation of EFA.

**Study design**

The study comprises of two interrelated studies: A Ph.D.-study focusing on teachers’ individual lifeforms, which was conducted in a rural village in Western Kenya from 2000-2001 among primary school teachers, and a Post. Doc. study focusing on teacher students at Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) in Western Kenya and Central Province in Kenya, which will be conducted during 2009-2011. The overall questions were the following: First, how teachers live, become and grasp the educational practice at a local school level. Second, how TTC with a starting point in formal educational policies such as Education-for-All (EFA) regulate the becoming of teacher students and their competencies as teachers. Finally, how normsupporting structures in the education system contribute to regulate the becoming of teachers and their competencies.

These questions become answered through a bottom-up research component supplemented by a top-down component in the field of H/E teacher training. The two components provide a micro/meso and a macro perspective on H/E teacher practice and training, where HE teacher practices in primary schools and training at Teacher Training Colleges is/will be examined through different interconnected perspectives. At the micro level, a selected group of teachers respectively teacher students were/will be examined to understand their experiences and development of education and health promoting HE competencies as a result of individual lifeform(s), institutional dynamics and structures in the local village schools, and training at TTC. At the meso level a group of teacher trainers at a specific TTC will be examined regarding institutional cultures and structures, which can be seen as local regulators for TTC regarding practices in educational materials and activities. At the macro level a study of EFA and the political-administrative discourses during the period of 1994-2009, where EFA first was acknowledged as a central education policy in Kenya, will enlighten the education policy and regulation, for instance textbooks, educational materials, teaching methods, exam etc. at TTC, which are seen as a superior frame for students’ and trainers’ possi-
ilities for thinking, feeling, acting and approving work at TTC.

Methodology
In the teacher practice and lifestyle study at school, fieldwork including participant observation, interviews and focused group discussions were chosen as a main strategy to obtain emic insight into teachers’ experiences and categories (Geertz, 1979), including to observe changes and development, which important could provide knowledge about themes and categories related to lifestyle issues and potential local answers to and reformulations of national education policies. Four teachers in a rural village in Western Kenya were located and followed at home and in school through a period of two years from 2000-2001, and teachers were interviewed regarding their personal lifehistory and future expectations to being teachers.

In the teacher student and Training College study, the fieldwork will take form as a rolling survey, where a group of teacher students at 2-3 TTCs in Western and central Kenya will be followed the first 10 months of their training at TTC, with a follow up study 3 months in their final 2nd year. Two concrete field methods is applied: Interviews/Focused Group Discussions and Participant Observation with a grounded focus, which will credit the study with validity in the sense of placing specific encounters, events and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful content (Tedlock 2000). To generalise data from the qualitative study, a questionnaire covering students in HE classes at the final 2nd year will be distributed nationally to all 28 TTCs in Kenya at the end of the teacher student study. The field of TTC is chosen because it is a contested field representing an important unit in the education sector, and because it has enormous implications on health communication at the local level in schools and implications for the content and regulation of health and education politics. The unit of analysis is the field of teacher students, partly how their training and period as teacher students become regulated from the political level, partly represented by a group of teacher students from one TTC. The field of health education is strategically chosen as a case study because of its obvious relevance for national health promotion in Kenya at MOH, for the quality of the education system and planning of teacher training curriculum at MOEST/KIE, and because a strategically chosen case study permits a wider generalisation of results (Flyvbjerg, 1991: 150, Bassey, 1999). Competence, learning, participation and other non-material aspects are best explored by qualitative approaches, as these are sensitive to understand the complexity of phenomena and the way they are embedded within structures and practices in every day life, institutions and systems, i.e. to secure the individual’s points of view, “thick descriptions” and examine the constraints of everyday life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 10). The following discussion and analyses in the below sections therefore focus on the available data up to this date, i.e. mainly the teachers lifeform and practice study (Dahl, 2005), but will also present preliminary data from the teacher professionalism and competence study.
Opposing paradigms: Educational policies, technologies and the life of teachers

The purpose of bringing teachers into focus was their central position as belonging to the few educational actors in rural villages and as being among the few local people with formal educational backgrounds. Their formal legitimate position as being among the few distributors of education potentially made them powerful individuals at the local level. Teachers in rural areas in many ways functioned as gatekeepers (Lewin, 1966) for children’s formal education. Teachers were central, educational actors and in many ways were in a position to exceed the often unambiguous and unequivocal educational field and the normativity and ideology embedded herein, which on the one hand was about education as a modern project of enlightenment and autonomy in the civil state (cf. Fuller, 1991), and on the other about education as part of an economic, globalised welfare project as formulated by the international donor bodies (cf. Samoff, 1993). One ambition was to challenge these “narratives of naturalness” about education in Third World countries, which have constructed certain experiences and understandings of the educational reality for millions of children, young people, their teachers and parents all over the world, and establish a view “elsewhere” (Haraway, 1992) with stories other than the dominant discourses. These discourses reflected and restrained the reality through certain optics such as unconditioned optimism or unlimited worries, which at best are simplifications, and at worst, represent an understanding of shortcomings and deficiencies (Dahl 2009). Instead focus has been on an empirically close and context sensitive approach to the ways of generating, analysing and interpreting empirical data as one way of directing the optic elsewhere. Enclosing a complex of theoretical and empirical perspectives and references has been seen as another way of finding way in the apparently incomprehensible.

Various circumstances concerning the teaching profession that had led teachers to experience themselves as being situated in a problematic, educational field could therefore be identified. With Bateson (Bateson et al., 1956) these circumstances could be recognized as a “structural double bind”. First, teachers experienced a decline in status and prestige as people acknowledge that investments in schooling do not necessarily lead to the anticipated outcomes, for instance, further education or increased job possibilities (cf. Serpell, 1993). Second, a heavy workload in teachers’ everyday life in school in the form of an “overloaded” curriculum characterised by many examinations and a multitude of detailed “science”-oriented information far from teachers’ and pupils’ experiences of “real life”, makes teachers become frustrated and eventually ignorant. Third, a school life that is thoroughly and systematically regulated and surveyed by an extended bureaucratic system, based on what Fuller (1991) has called the quest for modern life and signals of efficiency and technology in Third World countries, has apparently contributed to a feeling of distance and separation. Finally, inconsistencies in the rhetorics and metaphors of the educational society surrounding the concepts of schooling, education and children’s learning has led to confusion about educational practices and outcomes.
These inconsistencies could be located in opposing and somewhat conflicting paradigms within the Education-for-All (EFA) strategy: An administrative-bureaucratic logic (technology and time-regulated), a developmental psychological child-oriented-logic (emotional welfare etc.), and a political normative logic (self-reliance, versions of democracy etc.) (Dahl, 2005). At the local level furthermore the everyday life of teachers and the people around them played an active role in how life at school became constructed. Rules, logbooks and various forms of registers for teachers and pupils performances, “red label days” with a number of “prize-winning” activities, the constant evaluation and control of teachers’ work and pupils’ performances performed by among other local inspectors of schools (ZIS), constructed a bureaucratic everyday life and what I labelled the “administrative-bureaucratic logic”. The “developmental-psychological child-oriented logic” could be identified in textbooks from teachers’ own training periods and some of the methods teachers participated in during their years at training college. The “political normative logic” was a result of Kenya’s participation in the international society and the discourses in this field surrounding international educational politics and strategies such as for instance the Education-for-All-strategy (Dahl. 2005).

Looking at teachers’ practices at in schools however made it clear that teachers did not solely become captured within and were “forced” to teach within logics of these conflicting paradigms in the somewhat rigid educational structures. Rather teachers applied a more flexible approach towards teaching where especially their everyday life and personal life history played a major role.

**Teacher life and the teaching profession in three dimensions**

This results from the individual teacher study suggests that teachers’ lives and their profession became crystallised at three levels: As a tightly but differentiated teacher community in form of what I call a “teacher clan”, as a differentiated school life consisting of different social and cultural institutional “school cultures”, and finally, as a number of very different personal life stories arising from occurrences in the past, present and expectations to the future. In other words, through participation in various fields of practice - the educational society, the local school cultural universes, and personal life stories - teachers’ lives, “becomings” and educational practices become categorised, transmitted, and negotiated, as teachers move through them, and as people, places, time, things and circumstances change, and teachers act upon them and become acted upon themselves.

Looking at the personal lifestory of teachers, teachers’ lives were different and that differences had significant meaning for the teaching profession. Becoming a teacher in and out of the rural village school depended to a great extent on individual backgrounds, which resulted in teachers grasping the educational reality in various ways. Four teachers were selected and followed through a period of two years and this allowed for a detailed, differentiated and exceptional insight into their lives. Johansson and Miegel’s (1992) study of life and lifestyles as well as Bourdieu’s concept of
capital as human assets and potentials for living and striving (Bourdieu 1977, 1986, 1995), allowed me to differentiate between teachers’ lifestyles and in a more inclusive way encapsulate how teachers lived, experienced and practised their profession as teachers. Results from the study of teachers’ individual lives showed that teachers maintained multiple identities; they shared a common experience of belonging to a “teacher clan”, and at the same time they lived different lives as members of teacher staffs in different cultural and social environments at different schools. But on a personal level they were different. Being a teacher was clearly a personal matter.

Therefore, at one level teachers were “common” and the same, for instance through their general profession or because they worked in certain schools. At another level, the teachers were different and incomparable, because they navigated from distinctive values, possessed different forms of capital and dominance, with which they could develop their lifestyles within the field of other teachers, some more so than other. The four teachers were all in various ways members of the teacher clan and participants in various school cultures, which had an effect on their personal lives. But the personal teacher life also involved something else, namely individual backgrounds, emerged in the own socialisation and bringing-up. The different values and forms of capital teachers drew on to navigate and manifest themselves among other teachers, also affected their educational practices. “Political-strategical”, “rational-intellectualising”, “social-emotionalising” and “life conditions-economic” were categories developed on the basis of observations of teachers’ practice, and which single-handedly and in combination could make explicit aspects and elements of the four teachers’ educational practices. Drawing on Jenkins (1998) educational competencies could be understood as abilities, which were intertwined in and functions of personal life conditions and life stories. This also allowed differences to be made more explicit, which possibly had an effect in practice, but which all seized reality in more holistic and realistic ways than what was proposed by the official declarations. It could be concluded, that many educational practices were necessary, mutually supporting and complementing. In different ways, teachers dealt with important problems in school life.

The teacher community was differentiated, and teachers were different: They were all teachers, but lived different lives, which could be identified as “working teacher-underclass”, “urban teacher-middleclass”, “teacher life in the rural upper-class”, and “professional, rural teacher life”. Together with other teachers, places and circumstances they constructed some special forms of schools, where “performance”, “strategy” and “discussion” were central cultural categories, which in turn influenced their personal lives (Dahl, 2005). The question of whether competencies, values and lifestyles could live up to more general assumptions and expectations about the symbolic, cultural and material aspects of what a teacher was supposed to be, determined a teacher’s position in the larger teacher culture (Dahl, 2005).

**Teachers lives as educational paradoxes**
Teachers’ lives could be viewed as paradoxes, which - inspired by a contextualised concept of identity based on Erikson’s (1992), Barth’s (1998) and Lave’s (1993) work, and - combined with an understanding of identity as compositions of often more and opposing self understandings (cf. Holland et al., 1998) - allowed me to view teachers’ lives as containing both confirming as well as restraining elements. The four paradoxes were “self-maintenance in opposition”, “good taste without roots”, “gaining without society”, and “mediator without power”. In unique ways, each paradox related the four individual teachers to central, double dynamics in their respective lives - the emancipation of personal potential, and the experience of suppression according to certain restraints in their respective outer worlds, and which for the most part were beyond their reach. It could be concluded, that the teachers all in various ways made efforts to overcome these barriers within the field to which they attached importance, but that it only more or less became possible for them to change their lives. Nevertheless it was not negative but realistic life conclusions full of hope and positive expectations that teachers formulated for their lives. Teachers regarded themselves as modern individuals and members of a prestigious “working-class”, but this did not allow for the financial and cultural lifestyle that they felt their teacher profession potentially should legitimise. However, rather than being disillusioned and pessimistic, teachers approached their lives in optimistic and often imaginative ways, which affected their teaching profession.

With regard to teachers’ personal lifestyles it could be concluded that teachers were different, and that they grasped the educational reality in different ways. Teachers did not act in accordance with the “optimistic” but also fairly simplistic welfare project proposed in the ministerial guidelines, nor did they act according to minimal requirements imbedded in the bureaucratic structure. The study of the four teachers showed that the teaching profession in different ways melted together with their individual backgrounds and lifestyles in the past and present, and at the same time mirrored hope, expectations and dreams for the future. The concept of “life scripts” (Hundeide, 2001) allowed for a more plastic optic on life and lifestyle as pointing back and forwards. In other words, lived teacher life could be inscribed in a larger complex of meaning. To be a teacher was a “calling” or a profession, not a salary-earning job, but part of a lifestyle some were born into and others “accepted” as a possibility in the absence of something else and better - but which for all in the course of “doing teaching” became part of a common identity through which teachers understood themselves and others, and which none of the teachers could imagine should have been or should ever become different.

Summing up
The work up to this point demonstrated how teachers’ lives and practices has evolved at various levels – especially in the educational society and in personal life where teachers lived, practised, and became somebodies and somebody. The study of teachers’ lives and practices did not begin as theories “from above”, into which empirical data from the field was forced, but they represented
empirically-based theories that surfaced, after many hours in the field, and which subsequently could be synthesised into larger and more coherent perspectives. Inspired by clinical psychology, social and psychological conditions might be understood as an interplay between various factors (i.e. Søndergård, 1990). In a multietiological perspective, several levels potentially point at several causal origins, which at the same time are considered to be of mutual influence. This approach was mirrored through acknowledging the fact that teachers were participants at various “levels”, fields or communities of practices, where their identities, roles and psychological self-understandings became expressed in various ways. Local everyday life and societal logics were some of these communities of practices that influenced teachers’ educational habitus and practices, and the result could be understood as paradoxes in the individual personal teacher’s life. With the negative conceptualisations could be articulated some restrictions in teachers’ outer world and context, which single teachers in their lifestyles and practices. The labels became a “fault of the surroundings”, and the aim was to demonstrate how some limitations in the surroundings in various ways influenced teachers and became a part of their lifestyle, in other words, that problems and reasons behind teachers’ practices could and should be viewed in a larger perspective than only at an individual level. The next step of the study is to explore the influence of professional training institutions on teachers’ competencies and how the field of discoursive practices and logics from the political level regulates the becoming of teachers in more professional ways.

References


Nairobi: MOEST.


